



Highlights of the Wheat Pool Committee Conventions



"Democracy cannot be learned from text-books; it must be learned by living and continuous practice."—ANON

Committee Program

No. 6

JULY 1958

Issued by
SASKATCHEWAN WHEAT POOL
REGINA, SASK.

SUMMARY OF OPINIONS FROM WHEAT POOL COMMITTEE CONVENTIONS

The annual program of Wheat Pool committee conventions was completed in June. This year, a number of districts initiated a new experiment and held their conventions during March and April. Districts that tried this experiment were 6, 7, 10, 11 and 14. The percentage of committee men in attendance was much higher than at meetings held in June. All concerned, including committee men, delegates and directors were satisfied that, weather and roads permitting, holding committee conventions before seeding may be a good thing.

There were 23 conventions held in March and April and 105 during the month of June, making a total of 128. Of these, 93 were single sub-district conventions, 31 were joint meetings of two sub-districts, and 4 included committee men from three sub-districts.

It is evident that the single sub-district conventions are best. Planning on a sub-district basis can be done in a manner which is more effective than when committee men from two or three sub-districts are involved. The provincial summary of attendance indicates that there is a growing awareness among committee men of the importance of these conventions. There were 250 more committee men in attendance this year as compared with one year ago. This is all to the good.

Group discussions were again used this year and to good advantage. Questions that were discussed by the groups had a practical application to the work of committee men. The questionnaire used was prepared by a group carefully chosen for the work. This was later approved by the Education Committee of the Board and by the Board of Directors.

A provincial summary of these discussions, opinions and suggestions by committee men will prove to be of real value to the

delegates, directors, travelling superintendents, fieldmen and the entire Country Organization Department.

Here are a number of opinions expressed by groups after careful consideration of the more important questions asked at these conventions:

Question: Is the method used by the Wheat Pool to give information to its members effective? If not, why?

Replies: most groups replied in the affirmative but pointed out that the methods used were only partly effective and made the following positive recommendations:

1. That delegates and employees of the organization should meet local committees oftener.

2. That committees should read and make greater use of committee programs at committee meetings.

3. That committee members should make every effort to attend **all** committee meetings.

4. That co-operative education programs of the Wheat Pool should be increased and expanded, particularly among young people.

5. That radio coverage be expanded.

6. That the annual report sent to all members should be much shorter and more attractive.

7. That more personal contact with committee men should be made by delegates and fieldmen.

8. That committee men should make more effort to impart information they have to the membership at large. Most groups were of the opinion that committee men were well informed but that this information 'stayed with committee members in too many cases'.

Question: Is the method used by the Wheat Pool to gather information from members effective? If not, why?

Replies: Here, again, most groups replied in the affirmative but were not completely satisfied and a number of observations were made which are of general interest:

1. That too many members of the Wheat Pool show a pathetic lack of individual responsibility and fail to attend any kind of Pool meetings at which Wheat Pool policies are discussed and recommended.

2. There seems to be a general dislike of meetings of all kinds. People seem to prefer to listen to radio and watch T.V.

3. That local committees should become more active in seeking opinions of members on important agricultural problems. On this point it was suggested by many groups that committee men could improve conditions by personally inviting members to attend all Pool meetings in their respective districts.

4. That in their associations and contact with members, all employees should emphasize the importance of general agricultural conditions and the policies of the Wheat Pool, which, if implemented, would help to stabilize economic conditions of farmers in Western Canada.

Question: What proportion of the members at your shipping point are well informed on the Wheat Pool's set-up, operation and policies?

Replies: These replies varied from a low of 10% to a high of 100%, but it is interesting to note that the provincial average stands at only 47%.

Question: What proportion of the members in your area look upon the Wheat Pool as:

A. Merely an elevator system?

Replies: It is interesting to note that the replies to this question ranged from 5% to 85%. The provincial average was 45%.

B. How many look upon the Pool as a farm organization?

Replies: Here again the replies varied from a low of 15% to a high of 100%. The provincial average was 60%.

It is recognized that averages and percentages should not be taken too seriously as they could be misleading, but a close study and analysis of the district summaries sent in by fieldmen would indicate a necessity to

speed up and tighten up our work in the country by all branches of our organization from the top to the bottom and from the bottom to the top.

Question: Does the policy of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, as laid down by the delegates, represent the viewpoint of its members?

Replies: It is estimated that about 80% of the replies to this question were a definite 'yes' without any qualifications. A number of qualifications that were used could be summarized as follows:

1. Wheat Pool policies represent the views of the majority of its members. It cannot represent those who do not attend meetings, do not vote for candidates for delegates and do not show any interest in the affairs of the organization.

2. Many groups emphasized the importance of all delegates arranging for October meetings at which resolutions could be introduced expressing the wishes of members on many important questions of policy.

3. A number of groups were of the opinion that the Wheat Pool is not aggressive enough in formulating new policies, particularly with reference to livestock marketing.

Question: What should be done to maintain and strengthen the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool as a farm organization?

Replies: There were over 400 recommendations made by groups at committee conventions. The following is a summary of these recommendations listed in order of preference as decided by the groups:

1. All programs of co-operative education carried on by the Wheat Pool should be increased and strengthened. In this connection it should be explained that what the groups had in mind was the expansion of all educational programs, including young people, committee men, members at large and all Wheat Pool employees of all Divisions.

2. That a special effort be made to elect some younger farmers to all Wheat Pool committees and that October committee meetings should consider the advisability of

appointing nominating committees who would prepare a list of candidates for members of local committees and present them to the local annual meetings held during November and December.

3. That a concentrated effort be made by all committees to become more active in spreading co-operative philosophy to the membership, explaining Wheat Pool accomplishments and gathering members' opinions and recommendations on new policies for the organization. It should be noted that the need for more zeal and enthusiasm in this work among all committee members was stressed again and again.

4. Many groups mentioned the fact that the co-operative movement is indivisible; that strong consumer co-operatives and credit unions helped the Wheat Pool and a strong sentiment in support of the Wheat Pool in any Saskatchewan community helped the growth of other co-operatives in that community. The need for complete harmony and unity of all farm groups was also mentioned many times. It was felt that this unity should be maintained and developed by all concerned.

5. Some groups felt that committee men, delegates, agents and other employees were too modest. They suggested that all concerned should be more aggressive in talking about the past accomplishments of the Wheat Pool. They felt that if past achievements of the organization were widely known by most Saskatchewan farmers the future of the Wheat Pool as a farm organization would be assured and strengthened.

6. A large number of groups suggested that there should be more public relations work done with non-farm groups in Canada and particularly Western Canada. It was felt that such work would result in wider and more general support of the Wheat Pool's agricultural policies.

7. A good number of discussion groups suggested that more use should be made of the services of local weekly newspapers by Wheat Pool committees and delegates. It was suggested that this could take the form of news items about local Wheat Pool or other co-operative activities and advertising of

Pool meetings, Citizenship Days and other important events.

8. The importance of personal visits to committee members by delegates, fieldmen and other employees of the Wheat Pool was rated pretty high by a number of groups.

9. Many groups were strongly of the opinion that local annual meetings of shareholders should be better organized, shorter and streamlined. They felt that more leadership should be given to committees as to how to make these meetings attractive to more people, particularly young farmers.

10. Some groups suggested more general meetings of growers, with picture shows, including educational films, and a talk by the delegate or the fieldman.

11. A number of groups suggested that committee men should pass on their copies of the 'Committee Program' to other members who are not on the committee.

12. That committees should arrange for shareholders' meetings immediately after committee conventions for the purpose of reporting on important discussions at these conventions. It was generally agreed that the date for this shareholders' meeting should be decided at the committee meeting prior to committee conventions.

There were other opinions expressed by groups often enough to warrant mentioning them in this program. These are as follows:

» That there should be closer relations between the Pool agent, the committee and the growers;

» That there should be more mass meetings in the province addressed by top leaders of the Pool;

» That more use be made of radio and TV;

» That top Management should cultivate a more sympathetic ear to local problems;

» That the winning of the present battle on deficiency payments and the fight to give the farmer the right to deliver grain to the elevator of his choice would also help to further, maintain and strengthen the Wheat Pool as a farm organization.

Wheat Pool committees are local leaders. When active, they truly represent the majority of members in the country. At this year's convention they really 'put their teeth' into organizational problems and came forward with these recommendations for improvement. They have good reason to feel some satisfaction in a job well done.

It is suggested that these recommendations from committee conventions are worthy of close study and careful consideration by everyone concerned in the welfare of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool as a co-operative farm organization.

Farming's No Cinch

Lots of city folks who are SOLD on country living are OVERSOLD on farming for a profit. On the theory that sunshine and rain are free and seeds cost little, some figure farming is a cinch.

But the following facts, which are just a few of the many possible hazards, should make it obvious to the city folks that farming is far from as easy as it might look.

Say you're a livestock farmer, for example. You may wake up some zero morning to find your sows have lost their pigs; or discover a skunk has killed half your chickens. And you can't call up the cows on a blizzardy morning and say you're sick and won't be out to milk them this morning. Tending livestock also is a 365-day-a-year job.

Or, maybe you're growing some of these crops which Nature grows with free air, free rain and God-given soil. Sometimes rain doesn't come—and sometimes it floods you. Rust, hail or frost set you back a year or more.

Farming takes skill and experience, plus management. But it also takes many hours of hard work and contains many heartaches—just how many, a person never knows until he has farmed himself.—*G.T.A. Digest.*